Special Report From Geneva

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One Wistful Hope On A Bleak Horizon

Geneva April 2

It is time the anthropologists took over, and recognized the disarmament conference as a form of religious ritual engaged in by humanity between its world wars. Not long before the last one, a disarmament conference here was within sight of unanimous agreement on a treaty to ban the bombing plane; now another is as seriously—but no more or less—discussing the abolition of the ballistic missile. This city which gave mankind palliatives as diverse as Esperanto and the Red Cross, is the Mecca of the disarmers. Of the 25 Swiss cantons, Geneva, true to its tradition of inextinguishable hope, was one of the four which voted yesterday forever to bar atomic arms from Swiss territory. The Catholic, conservative and German-speaking cantons, however, swamped the socialistic French-speaking Protestant areas and the initiative was rejected almost two to one. The delegates, reconvening this morning for the third week of the current disarmament confernce, read in their morning Swiss papers not one but two disheartening messages. The more obvious was the dwindling chance of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons; the Swiss too want to reserve the possibility of an independent nuclear deterrent, as the British call it. Just around the corner is the prospect of an international trade in second hand last-year's model nuclear arms for the smaller and poorer Powers. The other, less obvious message, is that here, too, apathy reigns; barely half the Swiss bothered to vote at all. In Geneva canton, little more than a third went to the polls; the idealists marshalled, the hotelkeepers strolled in the sun. Mt. Blanc, after several days of rain, was majestically visible beyond the blue Lake; few cared to notice, a little further off, the mushroom cloud shaping up.

A Rest Home for Idealists

The setting for the conference at the *Palais des Nations* is as familiar as the libretto; weapons change but not disarmament tactics. These have become almost as stylized as the classical ballet. The *Palais* is deceptively severe in its architecture. The atmosphere in its offices is relaxed; the problems may be urgent but they are also prepetual and the staffs are in no hurry. This is a place of frequent and extended coffee breaks where idealists—like the fat peacocks on the wide well-kept lawns—may safely be let out to graze. Amid the neatly labelled cubby-hole offices one may find men engaged in the lifelong production of shocking but harmless documents on all kinds of nefarious human trades and habits, from those of narcotics to those of armament and war. One feels oneself among lotus eaters in a land of perpetual though gentle motion; here, as it were, God proposes and Satan disposes. As in a richly endowed temple, the bells ring and the rites are celebrated; mystic anguish subsides with the years into leisurely priesthood; evil goes on in the outside world but one's pension rights accumulate. The case against sin is voluminously documented but with discreet deference for the Powers whence, after all, the annual budgets are met. This deplorable world is made as pleasant for oneself as possible while waiting piously for the next. As I write, a planeload of go-getter women's strike-for-peace delegates have just arrived from America to grasp these officials working on disarmament firmly by the lapel, and to set the statesmen straight. I wish I could tap the conversations between these passionate women militants and these gracefully reconciled idealists who will be appalled to hear again all they know so well, and indeed earn their livelihood by repeating, though with no real hope that it will make any difference. How many moribund consciences these women will twinge!

The Foreign Ministers have left and the real work of the conference, as they say, has begun. This is true in the sense but only in the sense that the "real work" of the conference is to disentangle from one's pledges and try to put the blame for failure on the other side. From another, and also realistic

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The Soviet Proposal on Rockets

"There shall be eliminated from the armed forces, and destroyed, all rockets capable of delivering nuclear weapons, of any calibre and range, whether strategic, operational or tactical (except for strictly limited numbers of rockets to be converted to peaceful uses), as well as pilotless aircraft of all types. There shall be completely demolished all launching pads, silos and platforms for the launching of rockets and pilotless aircraft, other than those pads that will be retained for peaceful launchings under the provisions of Article 15 of the present Treaty. All instruments for the equipment, launching and guidance of the above mentioned rockets shall be destroyed. All underground depots for such rockets, pilotless aircraft and subsidiary facilities shall be demolished. Inspectors of the International Disarmament Organization shall control the execution of the measures referred to. . . . For the peaceful exploration of space there shall be allowed the manufacture and testing of appropriate rockets provided the plants manufacturing such rockets, as well as the rockets, themselves, will be subject to supervision by the inspectors of the International Disarmament Agency." . . . [The Agency] shall exercise control over launchings . . . through the establishment of inspection teams at the sites for peaceful rocket launchings which shall be present at the launchings and shall thoroughly examine every rocket or satellite before their launching."

—First Stage Provisions, Soviet Draft Arms Treaty

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sense, the conference may already be over. The disarmament conference, from this point of view, was an elaborate facade for the settlement of more important business. There seems to be a general though perhaps too optimistic feeling that the way was cleared between Rusk and Gromyko for a Berlin settlement which will be unveiled at a summit meeting in the latter part of May. On nuclear testing, there seems to be a tacit agreement between Washington and Moscow to take up the subject again only after another round of testing; the neutrals, desperate and frustrated, were to make one more grand effort behind closed doors this morning to stop them but the outlook was not promising. In Washington, one felt that all those well-publicized weeks of agonizing indecision was a fraud, that the decision to resume had already been made by the kind of political necessities to which Mr. Kennedy was most responsive. Here, in Geneva, one gets the impression that on the Soviet side, too, there is an almost smug readiness for another round, a complacent assurance that negotiation will be possible after it's over. The Russians could easily have put us on the spot by accepting neutral inspection if a neutral seismographic network turned up with objective indicators of a hidden nuclear test. But they, like us, seem afraid to risk even propaganda gestures lest they interfere with another series of tests.

The press has been encouraged by the U.S. information officers, as they are euphemistically called, to dwell on the unusually polite and non-acrimonious tone of the proceedings so far, as if it were a positive achievement for Mr. Zorin and Mr. Dean to meet without any attempt at mayhem. It would be tempting but untrue to attribute this improvement in tone to the tacit agreement of the great Powers to give themselves just one more round of testing before, as it were, joining atomics anonymous. The real reason for the restrained language seems to be the presence of the neutrals, for in the subcommittee on nuclear testing, where the nuclear Powers confront each other

Brazil to the Non-Nuclear Powers

"The experience of the last few years has taught us that this problem can be dealt with in two ways. The first consists in proposing to the other party what we know fully well in advance he cannot accept without weakening his position. It was this mode of procedure which made disarmament a favorite area for cold war maneuvering. Non-viable propositions were hurled from one side to the other, not in the expectation of any real progress in disarmament, but to make political capital with world public opinion. . . .

"Disarmament proposals which bear the imprint of the cold war are not submitted by one Nuclear Power in any hope of misleading another Nuclear Power, but to obtain credit with world opinion and particularly with the opinion of other nations eager for conditions which can assure their prosperity and give them confidence in the future. . . . The day when the unarmed Powers—thirsting for a lasting and genuine peace—decide to denounce and reject such cold war proposals . . . from either military bloc, the political effect of such projects can be offset and eliminated. The conditions for the emergence of disarmament policies with real results would then be created."

—Brazil's Foreign Minister, Dantas, Geneva, Mar. 16

Canada Lists Seven Disarmament Areas in Which US and USSR Move Closer

"1. The U.S. and Soviet proposals both provide for means of assuring that rockets and satellites placed in orbit or launched into outer space will be used for peaceful purposes only. Provision is made for advance notification to an International Disarmament Organization about all such launchings. Both sides have an overriding interest in reaching an understanding which will ensure that scientific advances in this field serve only the cause of peace. There is, therefore, every reason why agreement should be reached in short order.

"2. The U.S. proposals contain suggestions for observation posts and other procedures designed to reduce the risk of surprise attack or accidental war. Specific proposals to this effect do not appear in the new Soviet draft treaty, but similar ideas were advanced in the Soviet plan of Sept. 23, 1960, and again in the memorandum submitted by the USSR to the United Nations on Sept. 26, 1961. The fear that war could break out through accident or miscalculation is a continuing source of international tension which increases as more and more dangerous weapons are developed. Both sides have a vital interest in removing these fears as soon as possible. Both sides have proposed measures which would provide means of doing so. Further negotiation, and a willingness to compromise, could produce agreement in this field.

"3. The U.S. plan calls for technical studies of means to deal with chemical and bacteriological weapons. The Soviet Union has also put forward a suggestion for joint studies in this area in its plan of Sept. 23, 1960. In the opinion of my Delegation, such technical studies should begin immediately. On the basis of existing proposals, it would appear that full agreement already exists on this point, and that there is no reason for further debate before taking concrete action.

"4. Provision is made in both plans—although at different stages—to cease production of fissile material for weapons purposes and to transfer existing stocks to peaceful uses. The increased amount of the initial reductions proposed by the U.S. representative on March 15 means that by the time the second stage is completed stockpiles would have been very greatly reduced. This fact brings the U.S. position much closer to the Soviet view that all such stockpiles should be eliminated in Stage II. In our opinion further negotiation could bring full agreement.

"5. Both plans contain proposals designed to prohibit the wider spread of nuclear weapons. A Resolution submitted by Ireland calling for international agreement in this field was endorsed by all members of the United Nations at the 16th session of the General Assembly. What is required now is early action to bring this recommendation into force.

"6. The U.S. program and the Soviet draft treaty both call for reductions of conventional arms in the first stage. The Soviet plan provides for reductions proportionate to manpower cuts. At our second meeting, the Representative of the U.S. put forward new proposals calling for a reduction by 30%. My Delegation believes that this development brings the views of the two major military powers closer together. Detailed negotiations should begin at once to remove remaining differences.

"7. In the crucial field of nuclear disarmament the positions of the two sides have likewise been brought substantially closer by the significant new U.S. proposals for a 30% reduction of nuclear weapons delivery vehicles in the first stage. The Soviet draft treaty calls for the complete elimination of all such vehicles in the opening stage. Nevertheless, having in mind the magnitude of the initial cuts proposed by the U.S. as well as the agreed principle of balance, my Delegation believes that detailed negotiation should bring the two major military Powers to agreement on phased reduction in this field."

—Mr. Green, Canada's Secretary for External Affairs, at the Geneva disarmament conference, Mar. 19

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without neutral witnesses, the transcripts reveal an acridly polemical tone which recalls the best days of Vishinsky and Dulles. In the lower ranks of the more or less permanent delegations on disarmament, these conferences are a form of gamesmanship; only a rare few dedicated souls take the work seriously. But among the leaders of the delegations, the momentum of combat in one Geneva conference after another has worked emotions to such a pitch that it would only take the slightest blip on the radar screens to get Mr. Dean to let fly with an H-bomb at Mr. Tsarapkin; after prolonged and repetitive bargaining sessions each side seems to regard the other as a pack of swindlers. Intimacy has not flowered into love.

The exasperation is as great on general and complete disarmament as on nuclear testing, but the situation is the reverse. On nuclear testing the two big Powers disagree violently in public on basic principles but agree privately in practice on resumption of testing. On general and complete disarmament, they agree publicly on basic principles but disagree violently in private as soon as the question arises of putting them into practice. The U.S. delegation is deeply annoyed—indeed regards it was a blow below the belt—that the Russians turned up with a detailed draft treaty on general and complete disarmament and tabled this as a basis for discussion. For a moment, last Thursday, the neutrals thought the sun was breaking through the angry clouds when the innocuous preamble of the Soviet draft with two U.S. amendments was almost adopted. It looked that night as if mankind were on the verge at least of a general and complete preamble to a disarmament treaty. But somehow—the details are not clear—the happy event was delayed and on Friday when Article 1 came up, heavy fighting broke out. While the preamble is merely against sin, Article 1 talks sweepingly of closing down all dens of military iniquity within four years. Though Mr. Kennedy's program of general and complete disarmament, as presented to the United Nations last September, is in principle as sweeping as the Russian and Mr. Zorin was able to defend the general declarations of Article 1 by quoting chapter and

Ethiopia Warns the World Again

"Over a quarter of a century ago His Majesty the Emperor addressed the League of Nations in this very city. He spoke then not only for Ethiopia but also for the weak and defenceless everywhere. He spoke against aggression, against injustice, against all abuses of power. Today the small nations of the world—weak, defenceless and at the mercy of those whose fingers are on the nuclear trigger, speak in the same vein—in the name of humanity. The words of Emperor Haile Selassie went unheeded in 1936, and we are all acquainted with the consequences. If today those who speak not from military power but from conviction go unheeded, this time the consequences will not be limited to a simple world war. It will surely mean extinction."

—The Ethiopian Foreign Minister at the 5th Plenary meeting, Geneva disarmament conference, March 21.

Krishna Menon's Proposal for "Peace Stations" to Monitor Nuclear Testing

"We are not prepared to say at the present time whether every explosion is detectable or not detectable. At the same time we submit that ours here is not an academic exercise. We are not trying to find out whether anything can be exploded in a laboratory or whether there could be an earthquake which could be mistaken for an explosion. By and large, is it possible to find out whether anybody is violating a treaty?

"Secondly, this Conference meets on the basis that agreements will be made and kept; otherwise why should we meet, why should we try to make agreements if we are sure beforehand that they will be broken? We can naturally make provision against the temptation on the part of people to get around them. Therefore we would say that any kind of agreement which by and large is feasible should be sufficient for the purpose—Mr. Unden [of Sweden] called it a provisional agreement. Whatever we do, if there are more explosions, what will happen to the work of this Conference and the atmosphere of peace and confidence that must be created in the world? There is nothing so dangerous as turning people into cynics in this matter. . . .

"We would also suggest that if the idea is that one cannot take for granted the results of the detection efforts by any of the three countries involved in this matter—that is to say if the United States is not prepared to accept the judgment on this score of the United Kingdom or the Soviet Union, or the other way around—it may be worth considering whether scientific detection stations could be established by national efforts in other countries or could be internationally established.

"If it is possible to spread bases all around the world or to manufacture these weapons in large quantities, it should also be possible to establish these peace stations in various parts of the world, in countries that are only partly committed or are uncommitted to the two blocs. Then, in the event of an explosion, the results would come in from everywhere. Today we measure radiation, and the results are internationally communicated. We may adopt a similar procedure. Therefore, as a compromise measure, it could be agreed for the time being that we should have other monitoring stations from which results would be received. If all the data collected pointed to one result, there would be no difficulty; if there were differences of opinion [as to whether the explosion was nuclear or not—IFS], then it would be for us to consider what would be done about them.

"The main explosions we are worried about at the moment are explosions in the atmosphere and the biosphere. These, it is admitted on all sides, can be detected, and the committing of such explosions—there is no other word for it—would be a violation of an international agreement. If there was a straightforward agreement between the nuclear Powers that there would be no more explosions and, if any were detected afterwards, that would be proof of the violation of the international treaty. That is all, in any case, that we could do. There is no way, except in a world State, of sending people from one place to another in order to enforce a treaty. . . .

"We have no desire to exaggerate this problem of explosions, but it has got so much into the mental makeup and fears and apprehensions of people and nations that it has almost come to be regarded as the acid test of what the great countries are prepared to do. People ask themselves: 'If they are not going even to stop tests, how will they abolish weapons?' How are we to explain this to our people? . . .

"While we are sitting here, tests are being contemplated by one country. It is unfortunate that in the period of suspension the Soviet Union broke the suspension that obtained and there was an explosion, about which we all protested at that time. But in that period of 15 or 18 months it was not a question of a lack of detection, it was not as though explosions had taken place clandestinely . . . the whole problem of detection is being projected disproportionately and given too much precedence. It really is not a problem but a conundrum."

—India's Defense Minister, Krishna Mennon, at the 5th Plenary meeting, disarmament conference, Geneva, Mar. 20

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The Time Limit Is The Key to A Disarmament Agreement

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verse from the U.S. plan, the Western side shied away violently. Mr. Godber of the United Kingdom didn't know why the two sides couldn't get together instead on such projects as a joint study of how best to verify the elimination of nuclear weapons stockpiles. Mr. Dean protested that the Russians were trying to build a house without a blueprint; they replied that their treaty *was* a blueprint, and that the other side was free point by point to amend or change that blueprint. To the outside observer it seemed that what was missing was not a blueprint but the reluctance on the U.S. side to be drawn into discussion of how to build the house of disarmament at all. On Friday, the very first day on which the plenary committee tackled the specifics of disarmament, the divergence grew so wide that Senator de Mello-Franco of Brazil spoke despairingly of "an impasse" though he rose later to explain tactfully that all he meant was that the conferees had arrived at a cross-roads.

No Absolute Guaranties

It is the old and familiar cross-roads. On the U.S. side we want absolute guaranties against violation of any treaty while the Russians want absolute guaranties that a treaty cannot be used to map their bases for attack before complete and general disarmament has been achieved. Neither side is prepared to recognize that while they talk of absolute security in either sense, technological changes are destroying it. The risk of sudden attack by a few planes or rockets hidden from inspectors is less than the risk of unleashing monsters of destruction through the probability of accident as these weapons pile up and grow more complex. On the other side, the Russian fear that inspectors may spot their bases for attack begins to seem ludicrous as we learn more and more about the surveillance to which they were subjected by U-2 and are being subjected by its successor satellite spy systems. These neuroses again block agreement. The key to resolution of the difficulty seems to lie in the time limit. If the process is long drawn out, then the Russians can reasonably fear that after much inspection and little disarmament, we may break off the process and be in a better position to attack. On the other hand, given the will to agree, if the time limit is short, verification should be negotiable, especially if sampling and zonal systems are applied. But the Russians cannot expect to get a treaty under which we would have no way to verify the forces which remained on their side after cuts were made.

The reader will note that after the pessimism I brought with me from the Washington scene I am beginning to take the details of negotiation seriously, as if all this were real. The neutral hope is that by a similar process maybe the West can be drawn so inextricably into discussion that it will be unable to back out. The U.S. must soon, if only to compete with the Russians, present something like a draft treaty of its own. In principle it cannot be too different. What happens when the two are put together? If a man doesn't want to marry a girl, he had best not enter into a theoretical discussion with her father, mother and brothers on when, where and how they would be wed if he finally made up his mind to wed her. Such theoretical discussions are perilous for bachelorhood. So the neutrals hold their breath and hope.

Why Total Disarmament?

"The existence of missile and nuclear weapons changes entirely the function of control. In the past, before World War II, for instance, one could discuss advantages and disadvantages of control over armaments. At present, reciprocal control over missile and nuclear armaments, providing both sides with detailed information on the location of military bases and rocket launching pads—can only encourage an aggressor, who is aware of the specific targets, to a sudden attack. And it is not able to prevent it. In this respect military experts in the East and West seem to be in agreement. Therefore, insofar as modern means of warfare are concerned, the dilemma—control over disarmament or control over armaments—boils down to the one of controlled disarmament or of an accelerated arms race and increasing threat of a sudden attack."

—Polish Foreign Minister Rapacki, Geneva, Mar. 21

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